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THE OLD UNFINISHED CHAMBER

The old "unfinished chamber!"—
I shut my eyes and see
The massive, smoke-browned rafters,
Each hewn from some huge tree;
No medieval castle
E'er boasted ribs more stout;
No wildest wind of winter
Could shake them with its rout.
And yet they condescended
To yield ungrudged support
To traces trim of popcorn
For winter evenings' sport;

To festooned wealth of apple,
And wrinkled rings galore
Of pie-prophetic pumpkin,
And grandma's treasured store
Of peppermint and spearmint,
Skull-cap and sage and dill,
Wormwood and balm and catnip—
Sure cure for every ill.
Small need had we of doctors!
At slightest hint of pain
Came grandma with her herb-drink,
And we were well again.

I see the huge old chimney,
Up which the wood fires roared,
On every side surrounded
By all our childish hoard
Of hazelnuts and beechnuts,
Gathered in golden days,
While saucy chipmunks scolded
And all the woodland ways
Were gay in gold and scarlet,
And all the air was sweet
With breath of glorious autumn,
Whose wealth was at our feet.

I see the small-paned windows
That, in a winter's night,
Would win to wondrous beauty
Of tracery azure-white,
Scenes of the sunny south land,
With towering tropic trees,
Pictures of polar regions
—And iceberg-haunted seas,
All that we read and dreamed of,
That travelers' tales rehearsed
We saw in our still corner
Of the great universe.

Then, when the days grew longer,
And weak the winter's chains,
From some dim, dreaming cranny
Out on the sunny panes
Big, sleepy flies crept staidly,
With dazed, bewildered mien,
As though they scarce remembered
The once familiar scene;
But when, by sunshine wakened,
They raised their cheery hum,
We knew that they were telling
"For true" that spring was come.

Ah, dreamy, blissful memories
Of dear, dim rainy days!
We could not "go a-fishing,"
And all our outdoor plays
Were set aside. What cared we?
We knew the latch-string stout
Of the old "unfinished chamber"
Was always hanging out.
What frolics 'neath the rafters!
What masquerading fine
In garments worn and faded,
Fashioned in "auld lang syne!"
What happy-hearted laughter,
What songs untouched by pain,
Blent with the obligato
Unceasing of the rain!
Dear old unfinished chamber!
No palace fairer seems—
None to my heart is nearer
In all the land of dreams.
—Minnie L. Upton, in Orange Judd Farmer.

Mr. Jobson Goes Fishing

"MRS. JOBSON," said Mr. Jobson, after he had finished reading the paper on Saturday evening, "what would you rather do or go a-fishin'?"

Mrs. Jobson wasn't familiar with the phrase, and she had to pass.

"Yes, I am sane," went on Mr. Jobson, observing Mrs. Jobson's puzzled look. "You are liable to railroad me across the eastern branch to the big government institution sooner or later, Mrs. Jobson, but I'm sane, all right. Here's what I mean: This is the beauteous spring season. Therefore it is the foolish season for fish. Fish bite in spring in the upper Potomac. Likewise, nature is now assuming her loveliest robes. I propose that we get a skiff to-morrow morning, row ten or 15 miles up the upper Potomac, drink in the beauty of the unfolding leafage, and catch a barrel of fish. I'll do the rowing."

Mrs. Jobson kept at her honiton lace work very industriously.

"Aren't you afraid there might be some danger in rowing now that you have grown so stout, and—" she began after a pause.

"Oh, that's it," interrupted Mr. Jobson. "You are of the opinion that it is my purpose to get you in a boat, pull her out to the middle of the river and scuttle her; or else you think that I don't know any more about rowing than I do of the Higher and Nobler—one or the other. Mrs. Jobson, I never won any diamond sculls for rowing, and I don't pretend that I can beat a Norfolk boat down to Old Point in an outrigger; but I can row, Mrs. Jobson—you don't want to let that fact get away from you; I can row, all right. And I can fish, too. And when you're throwing out jibes about people getting stout and puffy and things like that, permit me to remind you that the passing of the years is not leaving you exactly so sylph-like as you were when I came along and rescued you from single blessedness. I may not be quite so Slim Jimmy and quick on my pins as I was a couple o' years ago, but if I can't pull the both of us up to where the falls begin on the upper Potomac, without taking a long breath, and then turn against the tide, you can present my name for membership in the Fat Men's club, that's all.'

Thus it came about that shortly after nine o'clock on Sunday morning Mr. and Mrs. Jobson, with a plethoric basket of lunch, appeared at the foot of one of the Georgetown streets, where Mr. Jobson rented lines and sinkers and bought enough bait to fit out a Gloucester fishing smack for the Great Banks, and negotiated for a boat.

"I don't want any of your tubs," said Mr. Jobson to the boatman "Gimme a shipshape looking craft, that's got some style about it—none of these here clumsy outfits that look like Dutch frigates in a gale o' wind."

"Well, I've some nice outriggers," said the boatman, looking Mr. Jobson over out of the tail of his eye, "but they're a bit hard to manage, if you ain't used to 'em, and—"

"Are, hey?" said Mr. Jobson. "Well, if there's any one thing that I can do besides smoking and not playing on the cornet, it's just toying with an outrigger. That's what I had in mind—an outrigger. Gimme the longest and lowest and rakishest one you've got in the barn, and you'll see whether I can manage it or not."

"But," interposed Mrs. Jobson, after she had made some furtive gestures to the boatman, "haven't you often read of accidents with that kind of boat, and aren't they—"

"Do we do business, and do I get that outrigger?" said Mr. Jobson, severely, to the boatman, who had no alternative but to produce the style of boat that was demanded of him. Mrs. Jobson got into the stern sheets with many misgivings and with the look of one who is breathing silent prayers, but Mr. Jobson stepped heavily in with the air of a deep water, heavy weather cox'un of a pirate captain's gig.

"Just pass me those oars," he commanded the boatman, and then the boat was shoved off. Mr. Jobson dug the right oar into the water as if it was an oyster tong, and fanned the air with the left. The boat careened to the right, and Mrs. Jobson emitted a little scream of alarm. Mr. Jobson glared at her. Then he dug the left oar into the water, as if it was trying to make a sounding at that particular spot, while he wielded the right oar as if it were a cricket bat. The boat was listed to the left, and again Mrs. Jobson emitted a little scream of fear, holding on tight. Mr. Jobson glared at her some more, pulled out his handkerchief and mopped his face, and said deep things in his throat.

"This darned machine is out of order," said he, "or else you have put a job on me with the boatman, Mrs. Jobson. I suppose you came over here late last night and fixed it all up with him—arranged it so that we should both be dumped near the dock, and the boatman is to rescue you and let me go to the bottom. Then you collect my insurance money, pay your accessory in the crime, and—"

"Hey, there!" yelled the boatman; "catch this line, will you?"

Mr. Jobson caught the line the boatman threw him, and the outrigger was pulled back to the float.

"They're a bit hard to manage, as I told you," said the boatman. "Don't you think a plain skiff is what you want?"

Mr. Jobson regarded the boatman and Mrs. Jobson savagely.

"What I want," he said, "is some kind of a boat that will go through the water—not a machine that is purposely cranked up and fixed for the purpose of sending people who try to row it to a watery grave. If you've got that kind of a boat haul it out; that's all."

The boatman deposited Mr. and Mrs. Jobson in a safe-loking skiff of the flat-bottomed kind, handed Mr. Jobson the oars, and this time Mr. Jobson contrived to get the boat away from the float without catching more than half a dozen crabs. The tide was running out, and by the time Mr. Jobson had pulled the skiff half-way across the stream he began to pant and snort and puff like a small steam tug pulling an ocean steamship. The boat meanwhile was rapidly going down stream with the tide. Mr. Jobson mopped his perspiring face and gazed coldly at Mrs. Jobson, who was hanging on to the gunwals with a pale countenance.

"You just did this to humiliate me, didn't you, madam?" said Mr. Jobson, picking up the oars and pulling hard for the opposite shore. "It's just pie for you to have your husband made to look cheap in the eyes of the riff-raff, isn't it?"

"I'm sure I don't know what you—"

"Oh, no; you don't know anything about it," snorted Mr. Jobson. "You didn't rock that outrigger with your two hands so it wouldn't work as soon as I began to row in it, did you? And you didn't wink to that boatman to pick out the heaviest tub of a galleon that ever crawled through the water to make it appear that I was shy in rowing ability, did you?"

"Mr. Jobson, we'll go down to the Long bridge soon if you don't take the boat further up the stream," said Mrs. Jobson, noticing the rapid drift of the skiff downstream, "and then—"

"Let 'er drift out to sea, madam," said Mr. Jobson, in a tone of deadly coldness; "it would serve you right for forming an alliance with a murderous boatman to—"

Then Mr. Jobson went at the oars, and by dint of tremendous effort he managed to fetch up on the Virginia side, on the edge of a grass marsh, about half a mile below the point whence they started. There he threw out his line, and Mrs. Jobson threw out her line, and at the end of an hour's fishing Mrs. Jobson had caught four nice little perch, and Mr. Jobson hadn't got a bite. Then Mr. Jobson called a boy who was rowing near by to come over and tow the skiff back to the place where it had been hired. The boy hitched his own boat to a stake, and in eight minutes he had pulled the skiff containing Mr. and Mrs. Jobson to the float without so much as breathing hard.

"Madam," said Mr. Jobson, when they got home, about noon, lugging the basketful of untouched lunch, "the next time you begin to poetize and pipe-dream about the beauteous spring leafage, and bamboozle me into embarking with you on an expedition in which you have conspired to take my life, I'll be elsewhither, Mrs. Jobson; I'll be elsewhither—that's all."—Washington Star.

A Wise Poet.

Kipling was wise enough, says the Chicago Record, to wait until Joubert was dead and Cronje locked up before making his latest verses.

Doesn't Affect Price.

The new style of diamond is oval. But, says the Chicago Tribune, the price remains at the same old round figure.

A LITTLE NONSENSE.

First Trooper—"What do you think of him?" Second Trooper—"Well, he may be French by name, but he's British by nature."—Fun.

Trooper (who has caught a locust)—"Look 'ere, Bill! This is a rummy country. 'Ere's the bloomin' butterflies in khaki!"—Punch.

"See that young farmer, Maggie; he made a fortune cultivating weeds." "Surely not, John; what kind o' weeds were they?" "Widows."—Coloured Comic.

Miss Pechis—"Everybody seems to think I'm the picture of mamma. Do you?" Mr. Gallandt—"Well, I should say a very flattering picture."—Philadelphia Press.

"I love you madly, devotedly," said the ancient millionaire. "I place my fortune and my heart at your feet." "Do you love me enough," asked the fair lady, who wasn't so romantic as her words would imply, "to die for me?"—Philadelphia North American.

"Old Snipps is wild!" "Oh?" "Yes; he offered to make 100 khaki suits for as many officers among the volunteers, and charge nothing for them." "So I understood. Well?" "One suit went to a man who has owed him a pile of money for years; that's what's caused his dander to rise!"—Pick-Me-Up.

"What's the charge?" asked the court. "The prisoner, your honor," replied the officer, "asked this man here what his father was doing, and when told that the latter was a spy in the mint, without provocation, called the father a mince pie." "Poor fellow!" said the court. "An examination into his sanity seems almost unnecessary."—Philadelphia North American.

Mrs. Greene—"They do say that Mr. Slyder gambles. Isn't it awful?" Mrs. Gray—"I should say it was. Why, it's almost as bad as stealing. If he wins he robs some other man; if he loses he robs his family." Mrs. Greene—"At any rate, it is terribly wicked. By the way, I forgot to tell you, I won the first prize of the whist tournament last night—a beautiful silver cup." Mrs. Gray—"Oh, you lucky woman! How I envy you!"—Boston Transcript.

FIREPROOF CLOTHING.

Timid People in Germany May Array Themselves in Incombustible Raiment.

Consul Liefeld, writing to the state department from Freiburg, Germany, tells of a new fireproof material coming into use there. He says:

"As is well known, the substance usually employed for the manufacture of fireproof clothing, paper, theater curtains, etc., is asbestos, a mineral silicate, a variety of hornblende, which can be woven or otherwise prepared, and is infusible at ordinary temperatures; hence soiled articles made of asbestos need only be thrown into a fire to be cleaned. Asbestos has, however, several great disadvantages, viz., its high price and its great weight, the specific gravity being about three.

"A new method has been introduced here by which goods are rendered fireproof when treated chemically by a very quick process, which does not act on the fiber, so the goods lose nothing in strength, nor does the treatment in any way affect the color or perceptibly increase the weight, and the advance in the price of the article is very little.

"I procured some samples and tried a few experiments with cloth which had been made fireproof by this new process, and found that no flame or fire is produced, as was the case with similar goods which had not been so treated. Only where the candle flame came into contact with the cloth was the fiber charred, but there was no spread of fire, and as soon as the flame was removed the charring ceased. I poured some kerosene oil on a piece of the cloth and ignited it; the oil burned vigorously, but the cloth was simply charred where it had been soaked with oil, and there was no spread of fire. A piece of wood wrapped in thick fireproof canvas was placed for a few moments on the red-hot anthracite coals of a furnace, and when examined was found to be uninjured, except where it had been in direct contact with the coal.

"There is one disadvantage connected with this discovery, which prevents the use of these firepoof articles for outdoor purposes, viz., that water can dissolve the chemicals and then the substance is no longer fireproof, but as such material can be washed and then reimpregnated very easily and cheaply, and so again rendered incombustible, it would seem that this does not greatly depreciate its value. Steam and moisture do not affect the fireproof qualities, nor does the application of heat. It is also claimed that the manufactured article is not in the least poisonous.

"I have learned that the increase in price to the consumer of the fireproof article need not be more than about three cents per square yard over that of the unimpregnated, and in large quantities the difference would be even less, and the difference in weight is such that a piece of flag material weighing before treatment 130 grams per square meter would weigh after impregnation from 140 to 150 grams, which means only from ten to twenty grams per square meter more. If we consider 500 grams to the pound and one and one-fifth square yards to the square meter, this would mean an increase in weight of only one pound for about every 50 square yards of material. For other goods the average increase might be even less."

Misapprehending Woman.

"The Boers don't like to stand up in a fair fight."

"Well, Henry, fighting is tiresome work, and if you would rather sit down to it, whose business is it?"—Indianapolis Journal.

DID NOT CHASTISE HIS WIFE.

His Intentions Were Good, But the Good Woman Weighed 300 Pounds.

"Mawnin', jedge!"

He was an old, undersized darky with lips like a pair of purple radishes. He had a determined look in his eyes as he shuffled up to Justice Hall's desk at the police court the other day and doffed his hat with an air of old-fashioned southern courtesy, says the Chicago Inter Ocean.

"Good morning, Sam, what can I do for you this morning?" said the judge.

"I jes wants to inquiah what a man gets dat done whip his wife."

"He ought to be hanged," said Justice Hall, severely.

"But dat ain't what I wants ter know, jedge. I wants ter fin' out what de sentence ob dis co'ht am. Don't keer nuffin' 'bout what he oughta git."

"Well, if a man was brought up before me charged with beating his wife, I surely would give him the limit, and that would be fifty and costs."

"But dispose a man had provocation, jedge; 'spose he was jest fohced to it what would it be?"

"If the provocation was very great I might make it ten," admitted the judge.

"Das all right, jedge; das all right and I's suah willin' to pay dat fer de privilege of knockin' thundah out o' de ole 'ooman o' mine." The old fellow went down into the pockets of his ragged trousers and began to haul out dimes, nickels and pennies, and pile them up on the desk before the astonished justice.

"What's this for?" inquired the judge.

"Dat's to pay my fine, jedge; I 'spects to be befoh de coht tomawoh fer whippin' my ole 'ooman."

The judge put the money into an empty tobacco bag and laughed quietly to himself.

The next morning an old negro scarcely recognizable as the one who had been in the day before edged his way up through the crowd of prisoners before the judge's desk. He had one arm in a sling, an eye bound up, and court plaster crossed on different parts of his swollen countenance. With the well hand he carried a cane to steady himself, as one leg was sadly in need of repair.

His name was not on the docket, but he watched his chance and caught the judge's eye.

"Mawnin', jedge."

"Good morning, Sam; did you carry out your evil design of yesterday?"

"No, sah, jedge; dat's jest what I's come to tell you about. I's done changed my min' about whippin' my ole 'ooman, and I's come to git my money back. De ole 'ooman an' me has done made up. Dah she am, jedge, dat la'ge, han'some lady in de reah ob de coht."

He pointed to a colored woman that weighed in the neighborhood of 300 pounds, and stood nearly six feet tall, who displayed a double row of ivories as she smiled broadly.

The judge gravely handed the old negro the bag containing his ten dollars. He said nothing but watched the old fellow force his way painfully through the throng to his waiting better half, and deposit the bag in her outstretched hand. Then she took him by the well arm with a not too gentle grasp and led him out into the world.

NERVE AVERTED A CALAMITY.

How an Irish Agitator's Coolness in Time of Danger Saved Many Lives.

As everyone knows, Daniel O'Connell, the famous Irish agitator, was one of the bravest of mortals. He was, besides, possessed of great coolness when occasion required its exercise. An incident illustrative of this latter quality was recently related by one who witnessed it. On a certain occasion a meeting had been convened and a large crowd assembled in a room on the first floor of a building in a small city in Ireland.

O'Connell was about to address the people, when a gentleman, pale with fear, made his way to the platform and hoarsely whispered:

"Liberator, the floor is giving way! The beams that shore it up are cracking and we shall all fall through in a few minutes!"

"Keep silent!" said O'Connell; then, raising his voice, he addressed the assembly:

"I find that the room is too small to contain the number who desire to come in, so we must leave it and hold the meeting outside the building."

At this a few rose and went out, but the majority retained their seats. Then O'Connell said:

"I will tell you the truth; you are Irishmen, therefore brave men. The floor is giving way and we must leave this room at once. If there is a panic and a rush to the door we shall all be precipitated into the room below, but if you obey my orders we shall be saved. Let the 12 men nearest the door go quietly out, then the next 12 and so on till all have gone. I shall be the last to leave."

His instructions were obeyed to the letter and he waited, patient and calm, till all had gone out in safety. Then he walked quietly across the sundering, cracking floor, reaching the door just as the shattered beams gave way. And thus by the force of his strong will a terrible accident was averted.

The Regulation Proposal.

Daughter—No, mamma, Harold has not proposed as yet; that is, not in so many words.

Mother—Mercy me, Jane! You must not wait for words! Proposals are mostly made up of sighs, gurgles, stammers, coughs, hems, haws, and looks, you know.—Puck.

THE PRODIGAL SON.

Dr. Talmage Preaches a Sermon About the Elder Brother.

Lesson of the Parable—He Denounces Self-Righteousness and Lack of Sympathy for the Fallen and Unfortunate.

[Copyright, 1900, by Louis Klopsch.]

Washington,

In this discourse Dr. Talmage pleads for a hearty reception to all those who have done wrong and want to get back, while the unsympathetic and self-righteous are excoriated; text, Luke 15:8, "And he was angry and would not go in."

Many times have I been asked to preach a sermon about the elder brother of the parable. I received a letter from Canada saying: "Is the elder son of the parable so unsympathetic and so cold that he is not worthy of recognition?" The fact is that we ministers pursue the younger son. You can hear the flapping of his rags in many a sermonic breeze and the cranching of the pods for which he was an unsuccessful contestant. I confess that it has been difficult for me to train the camera obscura upon the elder son of the parable. I could not get a negative for a photograph. There was not enough light in the gallery, or the chemicals were too poor, or the sitter moved in the picture. But now I think I have him, not a side face or a three-quarters or the mere bust, but a full length portrait as he appears to me. The father in the parable of the prodigal had nothing to brag of in his two sons. The one was a rake and the other a churl. I find nothing admirable in the dissoluteness of the one, and I find nothing attractive in the acrid sobriety of the other. The one goes down over the larboard side, and the other goes down over the starboard side, but they both go down.

From all the windows of the old homestead bursts the minstrelsy. The floor quakes with the feet of the rustics, whose dance is always vigorous and resounding. The neighbors have heard of the return of the younger son from his wanderings, and they have gathered together. The house is full of congratulators. I suppose the tables are loaded with luxuries, not only the one kind of meat mentioned, but its concomitants. "Clap!" go the cymbals, "Thrum!" go the harps, "Click!" go the chalices, up and down go the feet inside, while outside is a most sorry spectacle.

The senior son stands at the corner of the house, a frigid phlegmatic. He has just come in from the fields in very substantial apparel. Seeing some wild exhilarations around the old mansion, he asks of a servant passing by with a goatskin of wine on his shoulder what all the fuss is about. One would have thought that, on hearing that his younger brother had got back, he would have gone into the house and rejoiced, and, if he were not conscientiously opposed to dancing, that he would have joined the oriental schottish. No, there he stands. His brow lowers; his face darkens; his lip curls with contempt. He stamps the ground with indignation; he sees nothing at all to attract. The odors of the feast, coming out on the air, do not sharpen his appetite. The lively music does not put any spring into his step. He is in a terrible pout. He criticises the expense, the injustice and the morals of the entertainment. The father rushes out bareheaded and coaxes him to come in. He will not go in. He scolds the father. He goes into a pasquinade against the younger brother, and he makes the most uncomely scene. He says: "Father, you put a premium on vagabondism. I staid at home and worked on the farm. You never made a party for me; you didn't so much as kill a kid. That wouldn't have cost half as much as a calf; but this scapegrace went off in fine clothes, and he comes back not fit to be seen, and what a time you make over him! He breaks your heart, and you pay him for it. That calf, to which we have been giving extra feed during all these weeks, wouldn't be so fat and sleek if I had known to what use you were going to put it. That vagabond deserves to be cowhided instead of banqueted. Veal is too good for him." That evening, while the younger son sat telling his father about his adventures and asking about what had occurred on the place since his departure, the senior brother goes to bed disgusted and slams the door after him. That senior brother still lives. You can see him any Sunday, any day of the week. At a meeting of ministers in Germany some one asked the question: "Who is that elder son?" and Krummacher answered: "I know him; I saw him yesterday." And when they insisted upon knowing whom I meant he said: "Myself; when I saw the account of the conversion of a most obnoxious man I was irritated."

First, this senior brother of the text stands for the self-congratulatory, self-satisfied, self-worshipful man. With the same breath in which he vituperates against his younger brother he utters a panegyric for himself. The self-righteous man of my text, like every other self-righteous man, was full of faults. He was an ingrate, for he did not appreciate the home blessings which he had all those years. He was disobedient, for when the father told him to come in he staid out. He was a liar, for he said that the recreant son had devoured his father's living, when the father, so far from being reduced to penury, had a homestead left, had instruments of music, had jewels, had a mansion, and instead of being a pauper, was a prince. This senior brother, with so many faults of his own, was merciless in his criticism of the younger brother. The only perfect people that I have ever known were utterly obnoxious. I was never so badly cheated in my life as by a perfect man. He got so far up in his devotions that he was clear up above all the rules of common honesty. These men that go about prowling among prayer meetings and in places of business, telling how good they are—look out for them; keep your hand on your pocketbook! I have noticed that just in proportion as a man gets good he gets humble. The deep Mississippi does not make as much noise as the brawling mountain rivulet. There has been many a store that has had more goods in the show window than inside on the shelves.

This self-righteous man of the text stood at the corner of the house hugging himself in admiration. We hear a great deal in our day about the higher life. Now, there are two kinds of higher life men. The one is admirable, and the other is most repulsive. The one kind of higher life man is very lenient in his criticism of others, does not bore prayer meetings to death with long harangues, does not talk a great deal about himself, but much about Christ and Heaven, gets kindlier and more gentle and more useful until one day his soul spreads a-wing, and he flies away to eternal rest, and everybody mourns his departure. The other higher life man goes around with a Bible conspicuously under his arm, goes from church to church, a sort of general evangelist, is a sort of nuisance to his own pastor when he is at home and a nuisance to other pastors when he is away from home, runs up to some man who is counting out a roll of bank bills or running up a difficult line of figures and asks him how his soul is, makes religion a dose of ipec acuanha. Standing in a religious meeting making an address, he has a patronizing way, as though ordinary Christians were clear away down below him, so he had to talk at the top of his voice in order to make them hear, but at the same time encouraging them to hope on that by climbing many years they may after awhile come up within sight of the place where he now stands. I tell you plainly that a roaring, roistering, bouncing sinner is not so repulsive to me as that higher life malformation. The former may repent; the latter never gets over his pharisaism. The younger brother of the parable came back, but the senior brother stands outside entirely oblivious to his own delinquencies and deficits, pronouncing his own eulogium. Oh, how much easier it is to blame others than to blame ourselves! Adam blamed Eve, Eve blamed the serpent, the senior brother blamed the younger brother, and none of them blamed themselves.

Again, the senior brother of my text stands for all those who are faithless about the reformation of the dissipated and the dissolute. In the very tones of his voice you can hear the fact that he has no faith that the reformation of the younger son is genuine. His entire manner seems to say: "That boy has come back for more money. He got a third of the property; now he has come back for another third. He will never be contented to stay on the farm. He will fall away. I would go in too and rejoice with the others if I thought this thing were genuine; but it is a sham. That boy is a confirmed inebriate and debauchee." Alas, my friends, for the incredulity in the church of Christ in regard to the reclamation of the recreant! You say a man has been a strong drinker. I say, "Yes, but he has reformed." "Oh," you say, with a lugubrious face, "I hope you are not mistaken; I hope you are not mistaken." You say: "Don't rejoice too much over his conversion, for soon he will be unconverted, I fear. Don't make too big a party for that returned prodigal or strike the timbrel too loud; and, if you kill a calf, kill the one that is on the commons and not the one that has been luxuriating in the paddock." That is the reason why more prodigals do not come home to their father's house. It is the rank infidelity in the church of God on this subject. There is not a house on the streets of Heaven that has not in it a prodigal that returned and staid home. There could be unrolled before you a scroll of a hundred thousand names—the names of prodigals who came back forever reformed. Who was John Bunyan? A returned prodigal. Who was Richard Baxter? A returned prodigal. Who was George Whitefield, the thunderer? A returned prodigal. And I could go out in all the aisles of this church to-day and find on either side those who, once far astray for many years, have been faithful, and their eternal salvation is as sure as though they had been ten years in Heaven. And yet some of you have not enough faith in their return.

An invalid went to South America for his health and one day sat sunning himself on the beach when he saw something crawling up the beach, wriggling toward him, and he was affrighted. He thought it was a wild beast or a reptile, and he took his pistol from his pocket. Then he saw it was not a wild beast. It was a man, an immortal man, a man made in God's own image, and the poor wretch crawled up to the feet of the invalid and asked for strong drink, and the invalid took his wine flask from his pocket and gave the poor wretch something to drink, and then under the stimulus he rose up and gave his history. He had been a merchant in Glasgow, Scotland. He had gone down under the power of strong drink until he was so reduced in poverty that he was living in a boat just off the beach. "Why," said the invalid, "I knew a merchant in Glasgow once, a merchant of such and such a name." And the poor wretch straightened himself and said: "I am that man!" "Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall."

Again, I remark that the senior brother of my text stands for the spirit of envy and jealousy. The senior brother thought that all the honor they did to the returned brother was a wrong to him: He said: "I have staid at home, and I ought to have had the ring, and I ought to have had the banquet, and I ought to have had the garlands." Alas for this spirit of envy and jealousy coming down through the ages! Cain and Abel, Esau and Jacob, Saul and David, Haman and Mordecai, Othello and Iago, Orlando and Angelica, Caligula and Torquatus, Caesar and Pompey, Columbus and the Spanish courtiers, Cambyses and the brother he slew because he was a better marksman, Dionysius and Philoxenius, whom he slew because he was a better singer. Jealousy among painters, Closterman and Geoffrey Kneller, Hudson and Reynolds. Francia, anxious to see a picture of Raphael, Raphael sends him a picture. Francia, seeing it, falls in a fit of jealousy, from which he dies. Jealousy among authors. How seldom contemporaries speak of each other! Xenophon and Plato living at the same time, but from their writings you never would suppose they heard of each other. Religious jealousies. The Mohammedans praying for rain during a drought; no rain coming. Then the Christians begin to pray for rain, and the rain comes. Then the Mohammedans met together to account for this, and they resolved that God was so well pleased with their prayers He kept the drought on so as to keep them praying, but that the Christians began to pray, and the Lord was so disgusted with their prayers that He sent rain right away, so he would not hear any more of their supplication.

A wrestler was so envious of Theogenes, the prince of wrestlers, that he could not be consoled in any way; and after Theogenes died and a statue was lifted to him in a public place his envious antagonist went out every night and wrestled with the statue, until one night he threw it, and it fell on him and crushed him to death. So jealousy is not only absurd, but it is killing to the body, and it is killing to the soul. How seldom it is you find one merchant speaking well of a merchant in the same line of business. How seldom it is you hear a physician speaking well of a physician on the same block. Oh, my friends, the world is large enough for all of us. Let us rejoice at the success of others.

Besides that, if we do not get as much honor and as much attention as others, we ought to congratulate ourselves on what we escape in the way of assault. The French general riding on horseback at the head of his troops heard a soldier complain and say: "It is very easy for the general to command us forward while he rides and we walk." Then the general dismounted and compelled the complaining soldier to get on the horse. Coming through a ravine, a bullet from a sharpshooter struck the rider, and he fell dead. Then the general said: "How much safer it is to walk than to ride!"

Once more I have to tell you that this senior brother of my text stands for the pouting Christian. While there is so much congratulation within doors, the hero of my text stands outside, the corners of his mouth drawn down, looking as he felt—miserable. I am glad his lugubrious physiognomy did not spoil the festivity within. How many pouting Christians there are in our day—Christians who do not like the music of the churches, Christians who do not like the hilarities of the young—pouting, pouting, pouting at society, pouting at the fashions, pouting at the newspapers, pouting at the church, pouting at the government, pouting at High Heaven. Their spleen is too large, their liver does not work, their digestion is broken down. There are two cruets in the caster always sure to be well supplied—vinegar and red pepper! Oh, come away from that mood. Stir a little saccharin into your disposition. While you avoid the dissoluteness of the younger son, avoid also the irascibility and the petulance and the pouting spirit of the elder son, and imitate the father, who had embraces for the returning prodigal and coaxing words for the splentic malcontent.

Ah, the face of this pouting elder son is put before us in order that we might better see the radiant and forgiving face of the Father. Contrasts are mighty. The artist, in sketching the field of Waterloo years after the battle, put a dove in the mouth of the cannon. Raphael, in one of his cartoons, beside the face of a wretch put the face of a happy and innocent child. And so the sour face of this irascible and disgusted elder brother is brought out in order that in the contrast we might better understand the forgiving and radiant face of God. That is the meaning of it—that God is ready to take back anybody that is sorry, to take him clear back, to take him back forever and forever and forever, to take him back with a loving hug, to put a kiss on his parched lip, a ring on his bloated hand, an easy shoe on his chafed foot, a garland on his bleeding temples and heaven in his soul. Oh, I fall flat on mercy! Come, my brother, and let us get down into the dust, resolved never to rise until the Father's forgiving hand shall lift us!

Oh, what a God we have! Bring your doxologies. Come, earth and Heaven, and join in the worship. Cry aloud! Lift the palm branches! Do you not feel the Father's arm around your neck? Do you not feel the warm breath of your Father against your cheek? Surrender, younger son! Surrender, elder son! Surrender, all! Go in to-day and sit down at the banquet. Take a slice of the fatted calf, and afterward, when you are seated, with one hand in the hand of the returned brother and the other hand in the hand of the rejoicing father, let your heart beat time to the clapping of the cymbal and the mellow voice of the flute. It is meet that we should make merry and be glad, for this, thy brother, was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.